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News Release

Violence has Significant Effects on Women's Health

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Data from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) indicate women who experience domestic violence suffer a significantly higher percentage of negative health effects than women who have not been abused. The UDOH and Utah Domestic Violence Council (UDVC) are urging Utahns experiencing abuse to reach out for help during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October.

Domestic violence is also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) and is abuse that occurs between two people in a close relationship. The term “intimate partner” includes current and former spouses and dating partners. IPV can take many forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and threats of abuse.

“Domestic violence is not just a personal issue. It is a health issue that demands immediate attention from communities and health officials,” said Teresa Brechlin, UDOH Violence Prevention Coordinator. “Our data show the devastating effects violence can have on a person’s mental and physical well-being.”

As examples, UDOH 2008 survey data show that females who have experienced IPV report a significantly higher percentage of the following effects when compared to those who have not been abused:

- Poor health (50.8% vs. 36%);
- Being a current everyday smoker (13.4% vs. 4.4%);
- Binge drinking (9.8% vs. 4.3%);
- Being limited in activities (40% vs. 20.7%);
- Having 7 or more poor mental health days in the past month (38.8% vs. 13.2%);

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- Being treated for mental illness (29.8% vs. 13.7%);
- Feeling worthless (8.0% vs. 1.4%);
- Feeling nervous (11.0% vs. 3.0%);
- Feeling that everything was an effort (15.5% vs. 4.8%);
- Not being satisfied with life (9.6% vs. 2.3%);
- Having 7 or more days of missed work/activities in the past month (11.9% vs. 2.9%); and
- Not receiving the social and emotional support they need (30.2% vs. 11.2%).

“We urge people in unsafe relationships to ask for help, for family and friends to reach out with support and information, and for those with questions to call for help,” said Judy Kasten Bell, Executive Director, UDVC.

Other data from the 2008 Utah Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) show:

- 14.2% of Utah women ages 18 and older reported that they had ever been hit, slapped, pushed, kicked, or hurt in any way by an intimate partner.
- The percentage of women who reported ever experiencing IPV increased with age, with the exception of women who were 65 years and older.
- About 66% of women said the perpetrator was their current or former husband or male live-in partner.
- Divorced or separated women reported the highest rates of ever having experienced IPV (42.1%).

Help is available for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by calling the toll-free, 24-hour Utah Domestic Violence Link Line at 1-800-897-LINK (5465) or the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis and Information Hotline at 1-888-421-1100.

For data and resources on domestic violence, sexual assault, or dating violence visit <http://health.utah.gov/vipp> or www.udvc.org.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.